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CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

**JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, ESQUIRE**

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

AND

**SEVERAL CITIZENS OF MASSACHUSETTS**

CONCERNING THE CHARGE

**OF A DESIGN TO DISSOLVE THE UNION**

ALLEGED TO HAVE EXISTED IN THAT STATE.

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**SECOND EDITION.**

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**Boston:**

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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The National Intelligencer of the 21st of October last, contains a statement made by the President of the United States, and published by his authority, in which he denounces certain citizens of Massachusetts, as having been engaged in a design to produce a dissolution of the Union, and the establishment of a separate Confederation. As no individual was named in that communication, a few citizens of Boston and its vicinity, who supposed that they or their friends might be considered by the public, if not intended by Mr Adams, to be implicated as parties to the alleged conspiracy, thought proper to address to him a letter dated on the 26th of November, asking for such a specification of the charge and of the evidence as might tend to remove suspicion from the innocent, and to expose the guilty, if any such there were. To this letter they received a reply from Mr Adams, dated on the 30th of December, in which he declines to make the explanation requested of him, and gives his reasons for that refusal.

This correspondence, together with the original communication in the National Intelligencer, is now presented to the public, accompanied by an appeal to the citizens of the United States, in behalf of those who may be considered as implicated in this charge.

If the result should be, either to fix a stigma on any citizens of Massachusetts, or on the other hand to exhibit Mr Adams as the author of an unfounded and calumnious charge, those who have made this publication will have the consolation of reflecting that it is not they who began this controversy, and that they are not answerable for its result. That result they cheerfully leave to an impartial and discerning public; feeling assured that the most thorough investigation will serve only more fully to prove the futility of the accusation.





The publication of a letter from Mr Jefferson to Mr Giles, dated the 25th of December, 1825, concerning a communication made by Mr Adams to Mr Jefferson, in relation to the embargo of 1807, renders necessary the following statement, which we are authorized by Mr Adams to make.

The indistinctness of the recollections of Mr Jefferson, of which his letter itself feelingly complains, has blended together three distinct periods of time, and the information, which he did receive from Mr Adams, with events which afterwards occurred, and of which Mr Adams could not have informed him. It fortunately happens that this error is apparent on the face of the letter itself. It says, 'Mr Adams called on me *pending the embargo*, and while endeavors were making to obtain its repeal.' He afterwards says, that, at this interview, Mr Adams, among other things, told him that 'he had information, of the most unquestionable certainty, that certain citizens of the Eastern States, (I think he named Massachusetts particularly) were in negotiation with agents of the British government, the object of which was an agreement that the New-England States should *take no further part in the war then going on*,' &c.

The embargo was enacted on the 22d of December, 1807, and repealed by the non-intercourse act on the 1st of March, 1809. The war was declared in June, 1812.

In August, 1809, Mr Adams embarked for Russia, nearly three years before the Declaration of War, and did not return to the United States till August, 1817, nearly three years after the conclusion of the peace.

Mr Madison was inaugurated President of the United States, on the 4th of March, 1809.

It was impossible, therefore, that Mr Adams could have given any information to Mr Jefferson, of negotiations by citizens of Massachusetts with British agents, *during the war*, or having

relation to it. Mr Adams never had knowledge of any such negotiations.

The interview, to which Mr Jefferson alludes, took place on the 15th of March, 1808, pending the embargo; but, at the session of Congress before the substitution for it of the non-intercourse act. The information given by Mr Adams to Mr Jefferson, had only an indirect reference even to the embargo, and none to any endeavors for obtaining its repeal. It was the substance of a letter from the Governor of Nova Scotia, to a person in the State of Massachusetts, written in the summer of 1807, and before the existence of the embargo; which letter Mr Adams had seen. It had been shown to him without any injunction of secrecy, and he betrayed no confidence in communicating its purport to Mr Jefferson. Its object was to countenance and accredit a calumny then extensively prevailing, among the enemies of Mr Jefferson, and the opponents of his administration, that he and his measures were subservient to France; and it alleged that the British government were informed of a plan, determined upon by France, to effect the conquest of the British provinces on this Continent, and a revolution in the government of the United States, as means to which they were first to produce war between the United States and England. From the fact that the Governor of Nova Scotia had written such a letter to an individual in Massachusetts, connected with other facts, and with the movements of the party then predominant in that State, Mr Adams and Mr Jefferson drew their inferences, which subsequent events doubtless confirmed: but which inferences neither Mr Jefferson nor Mr Adams then communicated to each other. This was the only confidential interview which, during the administration of Mr Jefferson, took place between him and Mr Adams. It took place first at the request of Mr Wilson Carey Nicholas, then a member of the House of Representatives of the United States, a confidential friend of Mr Jefferson; next, of Mr Robinson, then a senator from Vermont; and, lastly, of Mr Giles, then a senator from Virginia—which request is the only intervention of Mr Giles ever known to Mr Adams, between him and Mr Jefferson. It is therefore not surprising, that no such intervention occurred to the recollection of Mr Jefferson, in December, 1825.

This interview was in March, 1808. In May, of the same year, Mr Adams resigned his seat in the senate of the United States.

At the next session of Congress, which commenced in November, 1808, Mr Adams was a private citizen, residing at Boston. The embargo was still in force; operating with ex-



treme pressure upon the interests of the people, and was wielded as a most effective instrument by the party prevailing in the State, against the administration of Mr Jefferson. The people were constantly instigated to forcible resistance against it ; and juries after juries acquitted the violators of it, upon the ground that it was unconstitutional, assumed in the face of a solemn decision of the District Court of the United States. A separation of the Union was openly stimulated in the public prints, and a Convention of Delegates of the New England States, to meet at New Haven was intended and proposed.

Mr Giles, and several other members of Congress, during this session, wrote to Mr Adams confidential letters, informing him of the various measures proposed as reinforcements or substitutes for the embargo, and soliciting his opinions upon the subject. He answered those letters with frankness, and in confidence. He earnestly recommended the substitution of the non-intercourse for the embargo ; and, in giving his reasons for this preference, was necessarily led to enlarge upon the views and purposes of certain leaders of the party, which had the management of the State Legislature in their hands. He urged that a continuance of the embargo much longer would certainly be met by forcible resistance, supported by the Legislature, and probably by the Judiciary of the State. That to quell that resistance, if force should be resorted to by the Government, it would produce a civil war ; and that in that event, he had no doubt the leaders of the party *would* secure the co-operation with them of Great Britain.—That their object was and had been for several years, a dissolution of the Union, and the establishment of a separate Confederation, he knew from unequivocal evidence, although, not proveable in a Court of Law ; and that, in the case of a civil war, the aid of Great Britain to effect that purpose would be as surely resorted to, as it would be indispensably necessary to the design.

That these letters of Mr Adams to Mr Giles, and to other members of Congress, were read or shewn to Mr Jefferson, he never was informed. They were written, not for communication to him, but as answers to the letters of his correspondents, members of Congress, soliciting his opinion upon measures in deliberation before them, and upon which they were to act. He wrote them as the solicited advice of friend to friend, both ardent friends to the Administration, and to their country. He wrote them to give to the supporters of the Administration of Mr Jefferson, in Congress, at that crisis, the best assistance, by his information and opinions, in his power. He had certainly no objection that they should be communicated to Mr Jefferson ;

but this was neither his intention nor desire. In one of the letters to Mr Giles he repeated an assurance, which he had verbally given him during the preceding session of Congress, that he had for his support of Mr Jefferson's Administration no personal or interested motive, and no favor to ask of him whatever.

That these letters to Mr Giles were by him communicated to Mr Jefferson, Mr Adams believes from the import of this letter from Mr Jefferson, now first published, and which has elicited this statement. He believes, likewise, that other letters from him to other members of Congress, written during the same session, and upon the same subject, were also communicated to him; and that their contents, after a lapse of seventeen years, were blended confusedly in his memory, first, with the information given by Mr Adams to him at their interview in March, 1808, nine months before; and next, with events which occurred during the subsequent war, and of which, however natural as a sequel to the information and opinions of Mr Adams, communicated to him at those two preceding periods, he could not have received the information from him.



## CORRESPONDENCE.

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Boston, November 26, 1828.

TO THE HONORABLE JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

Sir,

The undersigned, citizens of Massachusetts, residing in Boston and its vicinity, take the liberty of addressing you on the subject of a statement published in the National Intelligencer of the 21st of October, and which purports to have been communicated or authorised by you.

In that statement, after speaking of those individuals in this State, whom the writer designates as 'certain leaders of the party which had the management of the State Legislature in their hands' in the year 1808, and saying that in the event of a civil war, he (Mr Adams) 'had no doubt the leaders of the party would secure the co-operation with them of Great Britain,' it is added, 'That their object was and had been for several years, a dissolution of the Union, and the establishment of a separate Confederation, he knew from unequivocal evidence, although not proveable in a court of law.'

This, sir, is not the expression of an opinion as to the nature and tendency of the measures at that time publicly adopted, or proposed, by the party prevailing in the State of Massachusetts. Every citizen was at liberty to form his own opinions on that subject; and we cheerfully submit the propriety of those measures to the judgment of an impartial posterity. But the sentence which we have quoted contains the assertion of a distinct fact, as one within your own knowledge. We are not permitted to consider it as the unguarded expression of irritated feelings, hastily uttered at a time of great political excitement. Twenty years have elapsed since this charge was first made, in private correspondence with certain members of Congress; and it is now deliberately repeated, and brought before the Public under the sanction of your name, as being founded on unequivocal evidence, within your knowledge.

We do not claim for ourselves, nor even for those deceased friends, whose representatives join in this address, the title of leaders of any party in Massachusetts; but we were associated



in politics with the party prevailing here at the period referred to in the statement above mentioned, some of us concurred in all the measures adopted by that party ; and we all warmly approved and supported those measures. Many of our associates who still survive, are dispersed throughout Massachusetts and Maine, and could not easily be convened to join us on the present occasion. We trust, however, that you will not question our right, if not for ourselves alone, at least in behalf of the highly valued friends with whom we acted at that time, and especially of those of them who are now deceased, respectfully to ask from you such a full and precise statement of the facts and evidence relating to this accusation, as may enable us fairly to meet and answer it.

The object of this letter therefore is, to request you to state,

First, Who are the persons, designated as leaders of the party prevailing in Massachusetts in the year 1808, whose object, you assert, was and had been for several years, a dissolution of the Union, and the establishment of a separate Confederation? and

Secondly, The whole evidence on which that charge is founded.

It is admitted in the statement of the charge, that it is not proveable in a court of law, and of course that you are not in possession of any legal evidence by which to maintain it. The evidence however must have been such as in your opinion would have been pronounced unequivocal by upright and honorable men of discriminating minds ; and we may certainly expect from your sense of justice and self respect a full disclosure of all that you possess.

A charge of this nature, coming as it does from the first magistrate of the nation, acquires an importance which we cannot affect to disregard ; and it is one which we ought not to leave unanswered. We are therefore constrained, by a regard to our deceased friends and to our posterity, as well as by a sense of what is due to our own honor, most solemnly to declare, that we have never known nor suspected that the party which prevailed in Massachusetts in the year 1808, or any other party in this State, ever entertained the design to produce a dissolution of the Union, or the establishment of a separate Confederation. It is impossible for us in any other manner to refute, or even to answer this charge, until we see it fully and particularly stated, and know the evidence by which it is to be maintained.

The undersigned think it due to themselves to add, that in making this application to you, they have no design nor wish to

produce an effect on any political party or question whatever. Neither is it their purpose to enter into a vindication or discussion of the measures publicly adopted and avowed by the persons against whom the above charge has been made. Our sole object is to draw forth all the evidence on which that charge is founded, in order that the public may judge of its application and its weight.

We are Sir, with due respect,  
Your obedient servants,

H. G. OTIS,

CHARLES JACKSON,

ISRAEL THORNDIKE,

WARREN DUTTON,

T. H. PERKINS,

BENJ. PICKMAN,

WM. PRESCOTT,

HENRY CABOT,

Son of the late George Cabot.

DANIEL SARGENT,

C. C. PARSONS,

Son of Theophilus Parsons, Esq. deceased.

JOHN LOWELL,

FRANKLIN DEXTER,

Son of the late Samuel Dexter.

WM. SULLIVAN,



MR ADAMS' REPLY TO THE PRECEDING LETTER.

*Washington, 30th December, 1828.*

Messrs H. G. Otis, Israel Thorndike, T. H. Perkins, William Prescott, Daniel Sargent, John Lowell, William Sullivan, Charles Jackson, Warren Dutton, Benjamin Pickman, Henry Cabot, C. C. Parsons and Franklin Dexter—

GENTLEMEN,

I have received your letter of the 26th ult. and recognizing among the signatures to it, names of persons for whom a long and on my part uninterrupted friendship, has survived all the bitterness of political dissension, it would have afforded me pleasure to answer with explicitness and candor not only those persons, but each and every one of you, upon the only questions in relation to the subject matter of your letter, which as men or as citizens I can acknowledge your right to ask ; namely whether the interrogator was himself one of the persons, intended by me in the extract which you have given, from a statement authorized by me and published in the National Intelligencer of 21st October last.

Had you or either of you thought proper to ask me this question, it would have been more satisfactory to me to receive the inquiry separately from each individual, than arrayed in solid phalanx, each responsible not only for himself but for all the others. The reasons for this must be so obvious to persons of your intelligence, that I trust you will spare me the pain of detailing them.

But, Gentlemen, this is not all. You undertake your inquisition, not in your own names alone ; but as the representatives of



a great and powerful party, dispersed throughout the States of Massachusetts and Maine : A party commanding, at the time to which your inquiries refer, a devoted majority in the Legislature of the then United Commonwealth ; and even now, if judged of by the character of its volunteer delegation, of great influence and respectability.

I cannot recognize you, on this occasion, as the representatives of that party, for two reasons—first, because you have neither produced your credentials for presenting yourselves as their champions, nor assigned satisfactory reasons for presenting yourselves without them. But, secondly, and chiefly, because your introduction of that party into this question is entirely gratuitous. Your solemn declaration that you do not know that the federal or any other party, at the time to which my statement refers, intended to produce the dissolution of the Union, and the formation of a new confederacy, does not take the issue, which your own statement of my charge (as you are pleased to consider it) had tendered. The statement authorized by me, spoke, not of the federal party, but of *certain leaders* of that party. In my own letters to the Members of Congress, who did me the honor at that agonizing crisis to our National Union, of soliciting my confidential opinions upon measures under deliberation, I expressly acquitted the great body of the federal party, not only of participating in the secret designs of those leaders, but even of being privy to or believing in their existence. I now cheerfully repeat that declaration. I well know that the party were not prepared for that convulsion, to which the measures and designs of their leaders were instigating them ; and my extreme anxiety for the substitution of the nonintercourse for the embargo arose from the imminent danger, that the continuance and enforcement of this latter measure would promote the views of those leaders, by goading a majority of the people and of the legislature to the pitch of physical resistance, by State authority, against the execution of the laws of the Union ; the only effectual means by which the Union could be dissolved. Your modesty has prompted you to disclaim the character of *leaders* of the federal party at that time. If I am to consider this as more than a mere disavowal of form, I must say that the charge, which I lament to see has excited so much of your sensibility, had no reference to any of you.

Your avowed object is controversy. You call for a precise state of facts and evidence ; not affecting, so far as you know, any one of you, but to enable you fairly to meet and to answer it.

And you demand,



1. Who are the persons designated as leaders of the party prevailing in Massachusetts in the year 1808, whose object I assert was, and had been, for several years, a dissolution of the Union, and the establishment of a separate confederacy? and

2. The whole evidence, on which that charge is founded.

You observe that it is admitted, in the statement of the charge, that it is not proveable in a court of law, and your inference is, that I am of course not in possession of any legal evidence, by which to maintain it. Yet you call upon me to *name* the persons affected by the charge; a charge in your estimate deeply stigmatising upon those persons; and you permit yourselves to remind me, that my sense of justice and *self-respect* oblige me to disclose all that I do possess. My sense of justice to you, Gentlemen, induces me to remark, that I leave your self-respect to the moral influences of your own minds, without presuming to measure it by the dictation of mine.

Suppose, then, that in compliance with your call, I should name one, two, or three persons, as intended to be included in the charge. Suppose neither of those persons to be one of you. You however, have given them notice, that I have no evidence against them, by which the charge is proveable in a court of law—and you know that I, as well as yourselves, am amenable to the laws of the land. Does your self-respect convince you that the persons so named, if guilty, would furnish the evidence against themselves, which they have been notified that I do not possess? Are you sure that the correspondence, which would prove their guilt, may not in the lapse of twenty-five years have been committed to the flames? In these days of failing and of treacherous memories, may they not have forgotten that any such correspondence ever existed? And have you any guarantee to offer, that I should not be called by a summons more imperative than yours, to produce in the temple of justice the proof which you say I have not, or be branded for a foul and malignant slanderer of spotless and persecuted virtue? Is it not besides imaginable that persons may exist, who though twenty-five years since driven in the desperation of disappointment, to the meditation and preparation of measures tending to the dissolution of the Union, perceived afterwards the error of their ways, and would now gladly wash out from their own memories their participation in projects, upon which the stamp of indelible reprobation has past? Is it not possible that some of the conspirators have been called to account before a higher than an earthly tribunal for all the good and evil of their lives; and

whose reputations might now suffer needlessly by the disclosure of their names ? I put these cases to you, Gentlemen, as possible, to show you that neither my sense of justice nor my self-respect does require of me to produce the evidence for which you call, or to disclose the names of persons, for whom you have and can have no right to speak.

These considerations appear indeed to me so forcible that it is not without surprise, that I am compelled to believe they had escaped your observation. I cannot believe of any of you that which I am sure never entered the hearts of some of you, that you should have selected the present moment, for the purpose of drawing me into a controversy not only with yourselves, but with others, you know not whom—of daring me to the denouncement of names, which twenty years since I declined committing to the ear of confidential friendship ; and to the production of evidence which, though perfectly satisfactory to my own mind, and perfectly competent for the foundation of honest and patriotic public conduct, was adequate in a court of law neither to the conviction of the guilty, nor to the justification of the accuser, and so explicitly pronounced by myself.

You say that you have no design nor wish to produce an effect on any political party or question whatever,—nor to enter into a vindication of the measures publicly adopted and avowed by the persons, against whom the above charge has been made. But *can* you believe that this subject could be discussed between you and me, as you propose, when calling upon me for a statement, with the avowed intention of refuting it, and *not* produce an effect on *any political party or question* ? With regard to the public measures of those times and the succeeding, which you declare to have had your sanction and approbation, it needs no disclosure now, that a radical and irreconcilable difference of opinion between most of yourselves and me existed. And can you suppose that in disclosing names and stating facts, known perhaps only to myself, I could consent to separate them from those public measures, which you so cordially approved and which I so deeply lamented ? Must your own defence against these charges forever rest exclusively upon a solemn protestation against the natural inference from the irresistible tendency of action to the secret intent of the actor ? That a statesman who believes in human virtue should be slow to draw this inference against such solemn asseverations, I readily admit : but for the regulation of the conduct of human life, the rules of evidence are widely different from those, which receive or exclude testimony in a court of law. Even there, you know, that



violent presumption is equivalent, in cases affecting life itself, to positive proof ; and in a succession of political measures through a series of years, all tending to the same result, there is an *internal* evidence, against which mere denial, however solemn, can scarcely claim the credence even of the charity, that believeth all things.

Let me add that the statement authorized by me, as published in the National Intelligencer, was made, not only without the intention, but without the most distant imagination of offending you or of injuring any one of you. But, on the contrary, for the purpose of expressly disavowing a charge, which was before the public, sanctioned with the name of the late Mr Jefferson, imputing to certain citizens of Massachusetts treasonable negotiations with the British government *during the war*, and expressly stating that he had received information of this FROM ME. On the publication of this letter, I deemed it indispensably due to myself, and to all the citizens of Massachusetts, not only to deny having ever given such information, but all knowledge of such a fact. And the more so, because that letter had been published, though without my knowledge, yet I was well assured, from motives of justice and kindness to me. It contained a declaration by Mr. Jefferson himself, frank, explicit and true, of the character of the motives of my conduct, in all the transactions of my intercourse with him, during the period of the embargo. This was a point upon which his memory could not deceive him, a point upon which he was the best of witnesses ; and his testimony was the more decisive because given at a moment, as it would seem, of great excitement against me upon different views of public policy even then in conflict and producing great exacerbation in his mind. The letter contained also a narrative of a personal interview between himself and me, in March, 1808, and stated that I had then given him information of facts, which induced him to consent to the substitution of the nonintercourse for the embargo ; and also that I had apprized him of this treasonable negotiation by citizens of Massachusetts, to secede from the Union during the war, and perhaps rejoin after the peace. Now the substitution of the nonintercourse for the embargo, took place twelve months after this interview, and at a succeeding session of Congress, when I was not even a member of that body. The negotiation for seceding from the Union with a view to rejoin it afterwards, if it ever existed, must have been during the war. I had no knowledge of such negotiation, or even of such a design. I could therefore have given no such information.



But in giving an unqualified denial to this statement of Mr Jefferson, and in showing that upon the face of the letter itself it could not be correct, it was due to him to show, that the misstatement on his part was not intentional ; that it arose from an infirmity of memory, which the letter itself candidly acknowledged ; that it blended together in one indistinct mass, the information which I had given him in March, 1808, with the purport of confidential letters, which I had written to his and my friends in Congress a year after, and with events, projects, and perhaps mere suspicions, natural enough as consequences of the preceding times, but which occurred, if at all, from three to six years later, and of which he could not have had information from me. The simple fact of which I apprized Mr Jefferson was, that, in the summer of 1807, about the time of what was sometimes called the *affair* of the Leopard and the Chesapeake, I had seen a letter from the governor of Nova Scotia to a person in Massachusetts, affirming that the British government had certain information of a plan by that of France, to conquer the British possessions and effect a revolution in the United States, by means of a war between them and Great Britain. As the United States and Great Britain were in 1807 at peace, a correspondence with the governor of Nova Scotia, held by any citizen of the United States, imported no violation of law ; nor could the correspondent be responsible for anything which the governor might write. But my inferences from this fact were, that there existed between the British government and the party in Massachusetts opposed to Mr Jefferson, a channel of communication through the governor of Nova Scotia, which *he* was exercising to inflame their hatred against France and their jealousies against their own government. The letter was not to any leader of the federal party ; but I had no doubt it had been shewn to some of them, as it had been to me, without injunction of secrecy ; and, as I supposed, with a view to convince me that this conspiracy between Napoleon and Mr Jefferson really existed. How that channel of communication might be further used, was matter of conjecture ; for the mission of Mr John Henry was nine months after my interview with Mr Jefferson, and precisely at the time when I was writing to my friends in Congress the letters urging the substitution of the non-intercourse for the embargo. Of Mr Henry's mission I knew nothing till it was disclosed by himself in 1812.

It was in these letters of 1808 and 1809, that I mentioned the design of *certain leaders* of the federal party to effect a dissolution of the Union, and the establishment of a Northern Con-

federacy. This design had been formed, in the winter of 1803 and 4, immediately after, and as a consequence of the acquisition of Louisiana. Its justifying causes to those who entertained it were, that the annexation of Louisiana to the Union transcended the constitutional powers of the government of the United States. That it formed in fact a new confederacy to which the States, united by the former compact, were not bound to adhere. That it was oppressive to the interests and destructive to the influence of the Northern section of the confederacy, whose right and duty it therefore was to secede from the new body politic, and to constitute one of their own. This plan was so far matured, that the proposal had been made to an individual to permit himself, at the proper time, to be placed at the head of the military movements, which it was foreseen would be necessary for carrying it into execution. In all this there was no overt act of treason. In the abstract theory of our government the obedience of the citizen is not due to an unconstitutional law. He may lawfully resist its execution. If a single individual undertakes this resistance, our constitutions, both of the United States, and of each separate State, have provided a judiciary power, judges and juries, to decide between the individual and the legislative act, which he has resisted as unconstitutional. But let us suppose the case that legislative acts of one or more States of this Union are past, conflicting with acts of Congress, and commanding the resistance of their citizens against them, and what else can be the result but war,—civil war? and is not that *de facto*, a dissolution of the Union, so far as the resisting States are concerned? and what would be the condition of every citizen in the resisting States? Bound by the double duty of allegiance to the Union, and to the State, he would be crushed between the upper and the nether millstone, with the performance of every civic duty converted into a crime, and guilty of treason, by every act of obedience to the law.

That the power of annexing Louisiana to this Union had not been delegated to Congress, by the constitution of the United States, was my own opinion; and it is recorded upon the journals of the senate, of which I was then a member. But far from thinking the act itself a justifying cause for secession from the Union, I regarded it as one of the happiest events which had occurred since the adoption of the constitution. I regretted that an accidental illness in my family, which detained me on my way to Washington to take my seat in the senate, deprived me of the power of voting for the ratification of the treaties, by which the cession was secured. I arrived at Washington on the



fourth day of the session of Congress, and on entering the city, passed by the secretary of the senate, who was going from the capitol to the president's house, with the advice and consent of that body to the ratification.

I took my seat in the senate the next day. Bills were immediately brought into Congress making appropriations to the amount of fifteen millions of dollars for carrying the convention into effect, and for enabling the president to take possession of the ceded territory. These measures were opposed by all the members of the senate, who had voted against the ratifications of the conventions. They were warmly and cordially supported by me. I had no doubt of the constitutional power to make the treaties. It is expressly delegated in the constitution. The power of making the stipulated payment for the cession, and of taking possession of the ceded territory, was equally unquestioned by me ;—they were constructive powers, but I thought them fairly incidental, and necessarily consequent upon the power to make the treaty. But the power of annexing the inhabitants of Louisiana to the Union, of conferring upon them, in a mass, all the rights, and requiring of them all the duties, of citizens of the United States, it appeared to me had not been delegated to Congress by the people of the Union, and could not have been delegated by them, without the consent of the people of Louisiana themselves. I thought they required an amendment to the constitution, and a vote of the people of Louisiana ; and I offered to the senate, resolutions for carrying both those measures into effect, which were rejected.

It has been recently ascertained, by a letter from Mr Jefferson to Mr Dunbar, written in July 1803, after he had received the treaties, and convened Congress to consider them, that, in his opinion, the treaties could not be carried into effect without an amendment to the constitution : and that the proposal for such an amendment would be the first measure adopted by them, at their meeting. Yet Mr Jefferson, president of the United States, did approve the acts of Congress, assuming the power which he had so recently thought not delegated to them, and as the Executive of the Union carried them into execution.

Thus Mr Jefferson, President of the United States, the federal members of Congress, who opposed and voted against the ratification of the treaties, and myself, all concurred in the opinion, that the Louisiana cession treaties transcended the constitutional powers of the government of the United States. But it was, after all, a question of constructive power. The power of making the treaty was expressly given without limitation. The



sweeping clause, by which all powers, necessary and proper for carrying into effect those expressly delegated, *may* be understood as unlimited. It is to be presumed, that when Mr Jefferson approved and executed the acts of Congress, assuming the doubtful power, he had brought his mind to acquiesce in this somewhat latitudinarian construction. I opposed it as long and as far as my opposition could avail. I acquiesced in it, after it had received the sanction of all the organized authority of the Union, and the tacit acquiescence of the people of the United States and of Louisiana. Since which time, so far as this precedent goes, and no farther, I have considered the question as irrevocably settled.

But, in reverting to the fundamental principle of all our constitutions, that obedience is *not* due to an unconstitutional law, and that its execution may be lawfully resisted, you must admit, that had the laws of Congress for annexing Louisiana to the Union been resisted, by the authority of one or more States of the then existing confederacy, as *unconstitutional*, that resistance might have been carried to the extent of dissolving the Union, and of forming a new confederacy ; and that if the consequences of the cession had been so oppressive upon New England and the North, as was apprehended by the *federal leaders*, to whose conduct at that time all these observations refer, the project which they did then form of severing the Union, and establishing a Northern Confederacy would in their application of the abstract principle to the existing state of things have been justifiable. In *their* views, therefore, I impute to them nothing which it could be necessary for them to disavow ; and, accordingly, these principles were distinctly and explicitly avowed, eight years afterwards, by my excellent friend, Mr Quincy, in his speech upon the admission of Louisiana, as a State, into the Union. Whether he had any knowledge of the practical project of 1803 and 4, I know not ; but the argument of his speech, in which he referred to my recorded opinions upon the constitutional power, was an eloquent exposition of the justifying causes of that project, as I had heard them detailed at the time. That project, I repeat, had gone to the length of fixing upon a military leader for its execution ; and although the circumstances of the times never admitted of its execution, nor even of its full developement, I had yet no doubt, in 1808 and 1809, and have no doubt at this time, that it is the key to all the great movements of these leaders of the federal party in New England, from that time forward, till its final catastrophe in the Hartford Convention.



Gentlemen, I observe among the signers of your letter, the names of two members of that Convention, together with that of the son of its president. You will not understand me as affirming, that either of you was privy to this plan of military execution, in 1804. That may be known to yourselves and not to me. A letter of your first signer, recently published, has disclosed the fact, that he, although the putative was not the real father of the Hartford Convention. As he, who has hitherto enjoyed unrivalled, the honors, is now disposed to bestow upon others the shame of its paternity, may not the ostensible and the real character of other incidents attending it, be alike diversified, so that the main and ultimate object of that assembly, though beaming in splendor from its acts, was yet in dim eclipse to the vision of its most distinguished members?

However this may be, it was this project of 1803 and 4, which, from the time when I first took my seat in the senate of the United States, alienated me from the secret councils of those leaders of the federal party. I was never initiated in them. I approved and supported the acquisition of Louisiana; and from the first moment that the project of separation was made known to me, I opposed to it a determined and inflexible resistance.

It is well known to some of you, Gentlemen, that the cession of Louisiana was not the first occasion upon which my duty to my country prescribed to me a course of conduct different from that which would have been dictated to me by the leaders and the spirit of party. More than one of you was present at a meeting of members of the Massachusetts Legislature on the 27th of May 1802, the day after I first took my seat as a member of that legislature. A proposal then made by me, to admit to the council of the Commonwealth, a proportional representation of the minority as it existed in the two houses, has, I trust, not been forgotten. It was the first act of my legislative life, and it marked the principle by which my whole public career has been governed, from that day to this. My proposal was unsuccessful, and perhaps it forfeited whatever confidence might have been otherwise bestowed upon me as a party follower. My conduct in the senate of the United States, with regard to the Louisiana cession, was not more acceptable to the leaders of the federal party, and some of you may perhaps remember that it was not suffered to pass without notice or censure, in the public federal journals of the time.

With regard to the project of a separate Northern Confederacy, formed in the winter of 1803 and 4, in consequence of the Louisiana cession, it is not to me that you must apply for copies



of the correspondence in which it was contained. To that and to every other project of disunion, I have been constantly opposed. My principles do not admit the right even of the people, still less of the legislature of any one State in the Union, to secede at pleasure from the Union. No provision is made for the exercise of this right, either by the federal or any of the State constitutions. The act of exercising it, presupposes a departure from the principle of compact and a resort to that of force.

If, in the exercise of their respective functions, the legislative, executive, and judicial authorities of the Union on one side, and of one or more States on the other, are brought into direct collision with each other, the relations between the parties are no longer those of constitutional right, but of independent force. Each party construes the common compact for itself. The constructions are irreconcilable together. There is no umpire between them, and the appeal is to the sword, the ultimate arbiter of right between independent States, but not between the members of one body politic. I therefore hold it as a principle without exception, that whenever the constituted authorities of a State, authorize resistance to any act of Congress, or pronounce it unconstitutional, they do thereby declare themselves and their State *quoad hoc* out of the pale of the Union. That there is no supposable case, in which the *people* of a State might place themselves in this attitude, by the primitive right of insurrection against oppression, I will not affirm: but they have delegated no such power to their legislatures or their judges; and if there be such a right, it is the right of an individual to commit suicide—the right of an inhabitant of a populous city to set fire to his own dwelling house. These are my views. But to those, who think that each State is a sovereign judge, not only of its own rights, but of the extent of powers conferred upon the general government by the people of the whole Union; and that each State, giving its own construction to the constitutional powers of Congress, may array its separate sovereignty against every act of that body transcending this estimate of their powers—to say of men holding these principles, that, for the ten years from 1804 to 1814, they were intending a dissolution of the Union, and the formation of a new Confederacy, is charging them with nothing more than with acting up to their principles.

To the purposes of party leaders intending to accomplish the dissolution of the Union and a new Confederacy, two postulates are necessary. First, an act or acts of Congress, which may be resisted, as *unconstitutional*; and, secondly, a state of excitement among the people of one or more States of the Union



sufficiently inflamed, to produce acts of the State legislatures, conflicting with the acts of Congress. Resolutions of the legislatures denying the powers of Congress, are the first steps in this march to disunion; but they avail nothing, without subsequent and corresponding action. The annexation of Louisiana to the Union was believed to be unconstitutional, but it produced no excitement to resistance among the people. Its beneficial consequences to the whole Union were soon felt, and took away all possibility of holding it up as the labarum of a political religion of disunion. The projected separation met with other disasters and slumbered, till the attack of the Leopard on the Chesapeake, followed by the Orders in Council of 11th November, 1807, led to the embargo of the 22d December of that year. The first of these events brought the nation to the brink of war with Great Britain; and there is good reason to believe that the second was intended as a measure familiar to the policy of that government, to sweep our commerce from the ocean, carrying into British ports every vessel of ours navigating upon the seas, and holding them, their cargoes, and their crews in sequestration, to aid in the negotiation of Mr Rose, and bring us to the terms of the British cabinet. This was precisely the period, at which the governor of Nova Scotia was giving to his correspondent in Massachusetts, the friendly warning from the British government of the revolutionizing and conquering plan of France, which was communicated to me, and of which I apprized Mr Jefferson. The embargo, in the mean time, had been laid, and had saved most of our vessels and seamen from the grasp of the British cruizers. It had rendered impotent the British Orders in Council; but, at the same time, it had choaked up the channels of our own commerce. As its operation bore with heavy pressure upon the commerce and navigation of the North, the federal leaders soon began to clamour against it; then to denounce it as unconstitutional; and then to call upon the *Commercial States* to concert measures among themselves, to resist its execution. The question made of the constitutionality of the embargo, only proved, that, in times of violent popular excitement, the clearest delegation of a power to Congress will no more shield the exercise of it from a charge of usurpation, than that of a power the most remotely implied or constructive. The question of the constitutionality of the embargo was solemnly argued before the District Court of the United States at Salem; and although the decision of the judge was in its favor, it continued to be argued to the juries; and even when silenced before them, was in the distemper of the times so infectious, that the juries themselves



habitually acquitted those charged with the violation of that law. There was little doubt, that if the question of constitutionality had been brought before the State judiciary of Massachusetts, the decision of the court would have been *against* the law. The first postulate for the projectors of disunion, was thus secured. The second still lingered ; for the people, notwithstanding their excitement, still clung to the Union, and the federal majority in the legislature was very small. Then was brought forward the first project for a Convention of Delegates from the New England States to meet in Connecticut, and then was the time, at which I urged with so much earnestness, by letters to my friends at Washington, the substitution of the non-intercourse for the embargo.

The non-intercourse was substituted. The arrangement with Mr Erskine soon afterwards ensued ; and in August, 1809, I embarked upon a public mission to Russia. My absence from the United States was of eight years' duration, and I returned to take charge of the department of State in 1817.

The rupture of Mr Erskine's arrangement, the abortive mission of Mr Jackson, the disclosures of Mr John Henry, the war with Great Britain, the opinion of the judges of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, that by the constitution of the United States, no power was given either to the president or to Congress, to determine the actual existence of the exigencies, upon which the militia of the several States may be employed in the service of the United States, and the Hartford Convention, all happened during my absence from this country. I forbear to pursue the narrative. The two postulates for disunion were nearly consummated. The interposition of a kind Providence, restoring peace to our country and to the world, averted the most deplorable of catastrophes, and turning over to the receptacle of things lost upon earth, the adjourned Convention from Hartford to Boston, extinguished (by the mercy of Heaven, may it be forever !) the projected New England Confederacy.

Gentlemen, I have waved every scruple, perhaps even the proprieties of my situation, to give you this answer, in consideration of that long and sincere friendship for some of you, which can cease to beat only with the last pulsation of my heart. But I cannot consent to a controversy with you. Here, if you please, let our *joint* correspondence rest. I will answer for the public eye, or for the private ear, at his option, either of you, speaking for himself upon any question which he may justly deem necessary, for the vindication of his own reputation. But I can recognise among you no representative charac-



ters. Justly appreciating the filial piety of those, who have signed your letter in behalf of their deceased sires, I have no reason to believe that either of those parents would have authorized the demand of names, or the call for evidence which you have made. With the father of your last signer, I had, in the year 1809, one or more intimately confidential conversations on this very subject, which I have flattered myself, and still believe, were not without their influence upon the conduct of his last and best days. His son may have found no traces of this among his father's papers. He may believe me that it is nevertheless true.

It is not improbable that at some future day, a sense of solemn duty to my country, may require of me to disclose the evidence which I do possess, and for which you call. But of that day the selection must be at my own judgment, and it may be delayed till I myself shall have gone to answer for the testimony I may bear, before the tribunal of your God and mine. Should a disclosure of names even then be made by me, it will, if possible, be made with such reserve, as tenderness to the feelings of the living, and to the families and friends of the dead may admonish.

But no array of numbers or of power shall draw me to a disclosure, which I deem premature, or deter me from making it, when my sense of duty shall sound the call.

In the mean time, with a sentiment of affectionate and unabated regard for some, and of respect for all of you, permit me to subscribe myself,

Your friend and fellow citizen,

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

# APPEAL

TO THE CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES.

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THE following appeal is made to you, because the charges which have rendered it necessary were exhibited by your highest public functionary, in a communication designed for the eyes of all ; and because the citizens of every State in the union have a deep interest in the reputation of every other State.

It is well known, that, during the embargo, and the succeeding restrictions on our commerce, and also during the late war with Great Britain, the State of Massachusetts was sometimes charged with entertaining designs, dangerous, if not hostile, to the Union of the States. This calumny, having been engendered at a period of extreme political excitement, and being considered like the thousand others which at such times are fabricated by party animosity, and which live out their day and expire, has hitherto attracted very little attention in this State. It stood on the same footing with the charge against Hamilton, for speculation ; against the late President Adams, as being in favor of a monarchy and nobility, and against Washington himself, as hostile to France, and devoted to British interests. Calumnies which were seldom believed by any respectable members of the party which circulated them.

The publication by the President of the United States, in the National Intelligencer of October last, has given an entirely new character to these charges against the citizens of Massachusetts. They can no longer be considered as the anonymous slanders of political partisans ; but as a solemn and deliberate impeachment by the first magistrate of the United States, and under the responsibility of his name. It appears also that this denunciation, though now for the first time made known to the public, and to the parties implicated, (whoever they may be,) was contained in private letters of Mr Adams, written twenty years ago, to members of the general government ; and that he ventures to state it as founded on unequivocal evidence within his own knowledge.

It was impossible for those who had any part in the affairs of Massachusetts during the period in question, to suffer such a charge to go forth to the world, and descend to posterity, without notice. The high official rank of the accuser, the silent, but baneful influence of the original secret denunciation, and the de-



liberate and unprovoked repetition of it in a public journal, authorized an appeal to Mr Adams, for a specification of the parties, and of the evidence, and rendered such an appeal absolutely imperative. No high-minded honorable man, of any party, or of any State in our confederacy, could expect that the memory of illustrious friends deceased, or the characters of the living, should be left undefended, through the fear of awakening long extinguished controversies, or of disturbing Mr Adams' retirement. Men who feel a just respect for their own characters, and for public esteem, and who have a corresponding sense of what is due to the reputation of others, will admit the right of all who might be supposed by the public to be included in Mr Adams' denunciation, to call upon him to disperse the cloud with which he had enveloped their characters. Such persons had a right to require that the innocent should not suffer with the guilty, if any such there were ; and that the parties against whom the charge was levelled, should have an opportunity to repel and disprove it. Mr Adams had indeed admitted that his allegations could not be proved in a court of law, and thereby prudently declined a legal investigation ; but the persons implicated had still a right to know what the evidence was, which he professed to consider as 'unequivocal,' in order to exhibit it to the tribunal of the public, before which he had arraigned them. He had spoken of that evidence as entirely satisfactory to him. They had a right to ascertain whether it would be alike satisfactory to impartial, upright, and honorable men.

It being determined that this denunciation could not be suffered to pass unanswered, some question arose as to the mode in which it should be noticed. Should it be by a solemn public denial, in the names of all those who came within the scope of Mr Adams' accusation, including, as it does, all the leaders of the federal party from the year 1803 to 1814? Such a course indeed would serve in Massachusetts, where the characters of the parties are known, most fully to countervail the charges of Mr Adams ; but this impeachment of their character, may be heard in distant States, and in future times. A convention might have been called of all who had been members of the federal party in the legislature during those eleven years ; and a respectable host they would be, in numbers, intelligence, education, talents, and patriotism ; yet it might then have been said— 'You mean to overpower your accuser by numbers ; you intend to seize this occasion to revive the old and long extinct federal party ; your purpose is to oppress by popular clamour a falling chief ; you are avenging yourselves for his ancient defection

from your party ; you are conscious of guilt, but you endeavor to diminish the odium of it by increasing the number of your accomplices.' These reasons had great weight ; and the course adopted after deliberation appeared to be free from all objection.

The undersigned, comprising so many of the federal party, that Mr Adams should not be at liberty to treat them as unworthy of attention, and yet so few that he could not charge them with arraying a host against him, addressed to him the above letter of November 26th. They feel no fear that the public will accuse them of presumption in taking upon themselves the task of vindicating the reputation of the federal party. The share which some of them had in public affairs during the period over which Mr Adams has extended his charges and insinuations, and the decided, powerful, and well merited influence enjoyed by their illustrious friends, now deceased, most assuredly gave to the undersigned a right to demand the grounds of the accusation ; a right which Mr Adams himself repeatedly admits might have been justly and properly exercised by each of them severally. Their demand was founded on the common principle, recognized alike in the code of honor and of civil jurisprudence, that no man should make a charge affecting the rights or character of others, without giving them an opportunity of knowing the grounds on which it was made, and of disproving it, if untrue. To this plain and simple demand the undersigned received the answer contained in the above letter of Mr Adams, dated on the 30th of December.

It will be seen that Mr Adams altogether refuses to produce any evidence in support of his allegations. The former part of his letter contains his reasons for that refusal ; and in the other part he repeats the original charges in terms even more offensive than before. When addressing to him our letter, we thought we might reasonably expect from his sense of what was due to himself, as well as to us, that he would fully disclose all the evidence which he professed to consider so satisfactory ; and we felt assured, that in that event we should be able fully to explain or refute it, or to show that it did not affect any distinguished members of the federal party. And if, on the other hand, he should refuse to disclose that evidence, we trusted that the public would presume, what we unhesitatingly believe, that it was because *he had no evidence that would bear to be submitted to an impartial and intelligent community*. Mr Adams has adopted the latter course ; and if the reasons that he has assigned for it should appear to be unsatisfactory, our fellow-citizens, we doubt not, will join us in drawing the above inference. We therefore proceed to an examination of those reasons.



Mr Adams first objects to our making a joint application to him ; acknowledging the right of each one alone to inquire whether *he* was included in this vague and sweeping denunciation. It is not easy to see why any one should lose this acknowledged right, by uniting with others in the exercise of it ; nor why this mere change of form should authorize Mr Adams to disregard our claim. But there are two objections to the course which he has condescended to point out, as the only one in which he could be approached on this occasion. Any individual who should have applied to him in that mode might have been charged with arrogance ; and to each of them in turn he might have tauntingly replied, ‘ that the applicant was in no danger of suffering as one of the ‘ leaders ’ in Massachusetts, and had no occasion to exculpate himself from a charge conveyed in the terms used by Mr Adams.’ The other objection is still more decisive. After allowing to this denunciation all the weight that it can be supposed to derive from the personal or official character of the accuser, we trust there are few citizens of Massachusetts who would be content to owe their political reputation to his estimation of it, and condescend to solicit his certificate to acquit them of the suspicion of treasonable practices.

Mr Adams next objects, that we make our application as the representatives of a great and powerful party, which, at the time referred to, commanded, as he says, a devoted majority in the legislature of the Commonwealth ; and he denies our right to represent that party. We have already stated the objections to a joint application by all, who might be included in this denunciation, and to a separate inquiry by each individual ; and some of the reasons which we thought, justified the course which we have pursued. We certainly did not arrogate to ourselves the title of ‘ leaders ;’ and Mr Adams may enjoy, undisturbed, all the advantage which that circumstance can give him in this controversy. But we freely avowed such a close political connexion with all who could probably have been included under that appellation, as to render us responsible for all their political measures that were known to us ; and we, therefore, must have been either their dupes, or the associates in their guilt. In either case, we were interested, and, as we apprehend, entitled, to make this demand of Mr. Adams.

As to the suggestion, that he spoke only of ‘ certain leaders’ of the federal party, and not of the party itself ; we certainly intended to deny our knowledge and belief that any such plot had been contrived by any party whatever in this State ; and it is explicitly so stated in our letter. This language would include



any number, whether large or small, who might be supposed to have leagued together, for the purpose suggested by Mr Adams. There seems, therefore, to be but little ground for this technical objection, that we do not take the issue tendered by his charge.

But we wish to examine a little further this distinction which Mr Adams relies upon, between a political party and its leaders. From the nature of representative government, it results, that, in conducting the business of their legislative and popular assemblies, some individuals will be found to take a more active and conspicuous part than the rest, and will be regarded as essentially influencing public opinion, whilst they are generally themselves merely impelled by its force. But this influence, in whatever degree it may exist, is temporary, and is possessed by a constant succession of different persons. Those who possess it for the time being, are called *leaders*, and, in the course of ten years, they must amount to a very numerous class. Their measures and political objects must necessarily be identified with those of their whole party. To deny this is to pronounce sentence of condemnation upon popular government. For, admitting it to be true, that the people may be occasionally surprised and misled by those who abuse their confidence into measures repugnant to their interests and duty, still, if the majority of them can, for ten years together, be duped, and led hoodwinked to the very precipice of treason, by their perfidious guides, 'without participating in their secret designs, or being privy to their existence,' they show themselves unfit for self-government. It is not conceivable, that the federal party, which, at that time, constituted the great majority of Massachusetts, will feel themselves indebted to the president of the United States, for a compliment paid to their loyalty, at the expense of their character for intelligence and independence.

It is in the above sense only, that a free people can recognize any individuals as leaders; and in this sense, every man, who is conscious of having enjoyed influence and consideration with his party, may well deem himself included in every opprobrious and indiscriminate impeachment of the motives of the leaders of that party. But it would be arrogance to suppose himself *alone* intended, when the terms of the accusation imply a confederacy of many. And while, on the one hand, it would betray both selfishness and egotism to confine his demand of exculpation to himself; so, on the other, it is impossible to unite in one application *all* who might justly be considered as his associates. It follows then that any persons, who, from the relations they sustained to their party, may apprehend that the public will apply



to them charges of this vague description, may join in such numbers as they shall think fit, to demand an explanation of charges, which will probably affect some of them, and may affect them all. The right, upon the immutable principles of justice, is commensurate with the injury, and should be adapted to its character.

Again, who can doubt that the public reputation of high minded men who have embarked in the same cause and maintained a communion of principles, is a common property, which all who are interested are bound to vindicate as occasion may require—the present for the absent—the living for the dead—the son for the father.

If any responsible individual at Washington should declare himself to be in possession of unequivocal evidence, that the leaders of certain States in our confederacy, were now maturing a plot for the separation of the States, might not the members of Congress, now there, from the States thus accused, insist upon a disclosure of evidence and names? Would they be diverted from their purpose by an evasion of the question, on the ground, that, as the libeller had not named any individuals, so there was no one entitled to make this demand? or would they be satisfied with a misty exculpation of themselves? This cannot be imagined. They would contend for the honor of their absent friends, of their party, and of their States. These were among our motives for making this call. We feel an interest in all these particulars, and especially in the unsullied good name of friends and associates, who, venerable for eminent talents, virtues and public services, have gone down to the grave unconscious of any imputation on their characters.

Mr Adams admits our right to make severally, the inquiries which have been made jointly; though in a passage eminent for its equivocation, he expresses a doubt whether we can come within the terms of his charges. On this remarkable passage we submit one more observation. As Mr Adams declares that he *well knew* from *unequivocal evidence* the existence of such treasonable designs, he must have known, whether the parties who addressed him were engaged in those designs. Why then resort to the extraordinary subterfuge, that *if* the signers of that letter were *not* leaders, then the charges did not refer to them?

There is then no right on the part of Mr Adams to prescribe to the injured parties, (and all are injured who may be comprehended in his vague expressions) the precise form in which they should make their demand. And his refusal to answer that which we have made, is like that of one who having fired a ran-



dom shot among a crowd, should protest against answering to the complaint of any whom he had actually wounded, because they could not prove that his aim was directed at them.

Another reason assigned by Mr Adams for his refusal to name the individuals whom he intended to accuse, is that it might expose him to a legal prosecution. He certainly had not much to apprehend in this respect from any of the undersigned. As he had originally announced that he had no legal evidence to prove his charge, and the undersigned had nevertheless called on him to produce such as he did possess, he must have been sufficiently assured that their purpose was not to resort to a court of justice, but to the tribunal of public opinion ; and that they had virtually precluded themselves from any other resort.

Mr Adams suggests another objection to naming the parties accused, on account of the probable loss of evidence, and the forgetfulness of witnesses, after the lapse of twenty years.

He undoubtedly now possesses all the evidence that he had in October last, when he published his statement. If he then made this grave charge against certain of his fellow-citizens, with the knowledge that there was no evidence by which it could be substantiated, where was his sense of justice ? If he made it without inquiring, and without regarding, whether he had any such evidence or not, intending if called upon to shield himself from responsibility by suggesting this loss of documents and proofs, where was then his self-respect ?

But did it never occur to Mr Adams, that the parties accused might also in this long lapse of time have lost the proofs of their innocence ? *He has known for twenty years past that he had made this secret denunciation of his ancient political friends ;* and he must have anticipated the possibility that it might at some time be made public, if he had not even determined in his own mind to publish it himself. He has therefore had ample opportunity, and the most powerful motives, to preserve all the evidence that might serve to justify his conduct on that occasion. On the other hand, the parties accused, and especially those venerable patriots who during this long interval have descended to the grave, *unconscious of guilt, and ignorant that they were even suspected, have foreseen no necessity, and had no motive whatever, to preserve any memorials of their innocence.* We venture to make this appeal to the conscience of Mr Adams himself.

Mr. Adams in one passage appeals to the feelings of the undersigned, and intimates his surprise that they should have selected the present moment for making their demand. He did



them but justice in supposing that this consideration had its influence on their minds. Their only fear was that their appeal might be considered as an attack on an eminent man, whom the public favor seemed to have deserted. But the undersigned had no choice. Their accuser had selected his own time for bringing this subject before the world ; and they were compelled to follow him with their defence, or consent that the seal should be set on their own reputations, and on those of their deceased friends forever. We said with truth, that it was not our design nor wish to produce an effect on any political party or question. We were not unaware that our appeal might lead to such measures as would seriously affect either Mr. Adams or ourselves in the public opinion. But whilst we did not wish for any such result, so neither were we disposed to shrink from it.

The necessity of correcting some mistakes in a letter of Mr Jefferson, which had been lately published, is assigned by Mr Adams as the reason for his publication. If that circumstance has brought him before the public at a time, or in a manner, injurious to his feelings, or unpropitious to his political views and expectations, we are not responsible for the consequences. We would observe, however, that it would have been apparently a very easy task to correct those mistakes, without adding this unprovoked denunciation against his native State.

Finally, Mr. Adams declines all further correspondence with us on this subject ; and even intimates an apprehension that he may have already condescended too far, and waved ' even the proprieties of his situation,' in giving us such an answer as he has given.

He very much misapprehends the character of our institutions, and the principles and spirit of his countrymen, if he imagines that any official rank, however elevated, will authorise a man to publish injurious charges against others, and then to refuse all reparation and even explanation, lest it would tend to impair his dignity. If he is in any danger of such a result in the present instance, he should have foreseen it when about to publish his charges, in October last. If ' the proprieties of his situation' have been violated, it was by that original publication, and not by too great condescension in answer to our call upon him, for an act of simple justice towards those who felt themselves aggrieved.

We have thus examined all the reasons by which Mr. Adams attempts to justify his refusal to produce the evidence in support of his allegations ; and we again appeal with confidence to our

fellow citizens throughout the United States, for the justice of our conclusion, that no such evidence exists.

The preceding observations suffice, we trust, to shew, that we have been reluctantly forced into a controversy, which could not be shunned, without the most abject degradation; that it was competent to us to interrogate Mr Adams, in the mode adopted, and that he declines a direct answer for reasons insufficient, and unsatisfactory; thus placing himself in the predicament of an *unjust accuser*.

Here, perhaps, we might safely rest our appeal, on the ground that it is impossible strictly to prove a negative. But though we are in the dark ourselves, with respect to the evidence on which he relies, to justify his allegation of a 'project,' at any time, to dissolve the Union, and establish a northern confederacy, (which is the only point to which our inquiries were directed,) it will be easy by a comparison of dates, and circumstances, founded on his own admissions, to demonstrate (what we know must be true) that no such evidence applies, to any man who acted, or to the measures adopted in Massachusetts at, and posterior to the time of the embargo. The project itself, so far as it applies to those men and measures, and probably altogether, existed only in the distempered fancy of Mr. Adams.

'This design' (he says) '*had been formed in the winter of 1803—4, immediately after, and as a consequence of, the acquisition of Louisiana.* Its justifying causes, to those who entertained it were, that the annexation of Louisiana to the Union transcended the constitutional powers of the government of the United States. That it formed, in fact, a new confederacy to which the states, united by the former compact, were not bound to adhere. That it was oppressive to the interests, and destructive to the influence, of the northern section of the confederacy, whose right and duty it therefore was, to secede from the new body politic, and to constitute one of their own. This plan was so far matured, that a proposal had been made to an individual, to permit himself, at the proper time, to be placed at the head of the military movements, which, it was foreseen, would be necessary for carrying it into execution.' The interview with Mr Jefferson was in March 1808. In May Mr Adams ceased to be a senator. In the winter of 1808—9 he made his communications to Mr. Giles. In August 1809 he embarked for Europe, three years before the war; and did not return until three years after the peace;—and he admits the impossibility of his having given to Mr. Jefferson information of negotiations between our citizens, and the British, during the war, or having relation to the



war—condescending to declare, that he had no knowledge of such negotiations.

The other measures, to which Mr Adams alludes, were of the most public character ; and the most important of them better known, in their day, to others, than they could be to him, residing in a foreign country ; and if the chain by which these measures are connected with the supposed plot shall appear to be wholly imaginary, these measures will remain to be supported, as they ought to be, on their own merits. The letter from the Governor of Nova Scotia, as will presently be seen, is of no possible significance in any view, but that of having constituted *the only information* (as he says) which Mr Adams communicated to Mr Jefferson at the time of his first, and only confidential interview. It was written in the summer of 1807, this country being then in a state of peace. The Governor's correspondent is to this hour unknown to us. He was *not*, says Mr Adams, a 'leader' of the Federal party. The contents of the letter were altogether idle, but the effect supposed by Mr Adams to be contemplated by the writer, could be produced only by giving them publicity. It was communicated to Mr Adams without any injunction of secrecy. He has no doubt it was shewn to others. Its object was, he supposes, to accredit a calumny, that Mr Jefferson, and his measures, were subservient to France. That the British government were informed of a plan, determined upon by France, to effect a conquest of the British Provinces on this continent, and a revolution in the government of the United States, as means to which, they were first to produce a war between the United States and England. A letter of this tenor was no doubt shewn to Mr Adams, as we must believe upon his word. The discovery would not be surprising, that British, as well as French officers, and citizens, in a time of peace with this country, availed themselves of many channels for conveying their speculations and stratagems, to other innocent ears as well as to those of Mr Adams, with a view to influence public opinion. But the subject matter of the letter was an absurdity.—Who did not know that in 1807, after the battle of Trafalgar, the crippled navy of France could not undertake to transport even a single regiment across the British Channel ? And if the object was the conquest of the British Provinces by the United States alone, how could a revolution, in their government, which must divide, and weaken it, promote that end ?

The folly of a British Governor in attempting to give currency to a story which savours so strongly of the burlesque, can be equalled only by the credulity of Mr Adams, in believing it cal-

culated to produce effect; and if he did so believe, it furnishes a criterion by which to estimate the correctness and impartiality of his judgment concerning the weight and the application of the other evidence which he still withholds, and from which he has undertaken with equal confidence to 'draw his inferences.' After the adjustment of the diplomatic preliminaries with Mr Giles and others, Mr Adams communicated NOTHING to Mr Jefferson, but the substance of the Nova Scotia letter. If Mr Adams had then known and believed in the 'project,' (the 'key' to all the future proceedings) it is incredible that it should not have been deemed worthy of disclosure—at *that time, and on that occasion.*

In this connexion we advert for a moment to the temper of mind, and the state of feelings, which probably gave rise to, and accompanied, this communication of Mr Adams. Circumstances had occurred tending to embitter his feelings, and to warp his judgment.

Mr Adams, just before the time of his interview with Mr Jefferson, had voted for the embargo. He had been reproached for having done this on the avowed principle, *of voting, and not deliberating*, upon the Executive recommendation. He had been engaged with his colleague in a controversy on this subject. His conduct, as he affirms, and as was the fact, had been censured, in terms of severity, in the public press. The Legislature of Massachusetts had elected another person to succeed him in the Senate of the United States, and had otherwise expressed such a strong and decided disapprobation of the measures which he had supported, that he felt compelled to resign his seat before the expiration of his term. These might be felt as injuries, even by men of placable temper. It is probable that his feelings of irritation may be traced back to the contest between Jefferson and the elder Adams. It is no secret, that the latter had cherished deep and bitter resentment against *Hamilton*, and certain other 'leaders' of the federal party, supposed to be Hamilton's friends. It would not be unnatural that the son should participate in these feelings of the father. When Mr Adams visited Mr Jefferson, and afterwards made his disclosures to Mr Giles and others, having lost the confidence of his own party, he had decided, 'as subsequent events doubtless confirmed,' to throw himself into the arms of his father's opponents. But there was a load of political guilt, personal and hereditary, still resting upon him, in the opinions of the adverse party. No ordinary proof of his unqualified abjuration of his late politics would be satisfactory;—some sacrifice, which should put his sin-



cerity to the test, and place an impassable barrier between him and his former party, was indispensable. And what sacrifice was so natural, what pledge so perfect, as this private denunciation! Nor does the effect seem to have been miscalculated or over-rated. Mr Jefferson declares that it raised Mr Adams in his mind. Its eventual consequences were highly, and permanently advantageous to Mr Adams. And though he assured Mr Giles, that he had renounced his party, without personal views; yet this 'denial,' considering that he had the good fortune to receive *within a few months*, the embassy to Russia, 'connected with other circumstances,' which ended in his elevation to the presidency, does indeed, according to his own principles of presumptive evidence, require an effort of 'the charity which believeth all things,' to gain it 'credence.'

To these public, and indisputable facts, we should not now revert, had Mr. Adams given us the names, and evidence, as requested; and had he forborne to reiterate his injurious insinuations. But as they now rest wholly upon the sanction of his opinion, respecting evidence which he alone possesses, we think it but reasonable to consider, how far these circumstances may have heated his imagination, or disturbed his equanimity, and given to the evidence, which he keeps from the public eye, an unnatural, and false complexion.

We proceed then to a brief examination of the alleged project of 1803--4—of the Northern confederacy.

In the first place, *We solemnly disavow all knowledge of such a project, and all remembrance of the mention of it, or of any plan analogous to it, at that or any subsequent period.* Secondly, While it is obviously impossible for us to controvert evidence of which we are ignorant, we are well assured it must be equally impossible to bring any facts which can be considered evidence to bear upon the designs or measures of those, who, at the time of Mr Adams' interview with Mr Jefferson, and afterwards, during the war, took an active part in the public affairs of Massachusetts.

The effort discernible throughout this letter, to connect those later events, which were of a public nature, and of which the natural and adequate causes were public, with the mysterious project, known only to himself, of an earlier origin and distinct source, is in the last degree violent and disingenuous.

The cession of Louisiana to the United States, when first promulged, was a theme of complaint and dissatisfaction, in this part of the country. This could not be regarded as factious or unreasonable, when it is admitted by Mr Adams, that Mr Jefferson

and himself entertained constitutional scruples and objections to the provisions of the treaty of cession. Nothing, however, like a popular excitement grew out of the measure, and it is stated by Mr Adams that this project '*slumbered*' until the period of the embargo in December 1807. Suppose then for the moment (what we have not a shadow of reason for believing, and do not believe) that upon the occasion of the Louisiana Treaty, 'certain leaders' influenced by constitutional objections, (admitted to have been common to Mr Jefferson, Mr Adams and themselves,) had conceived a project of separation, and of a Northern Confederacy, as the only probable counterpoise to the manufacture of new States in the South, does it follow that when the public mind became reconciled to the cession, and the beneficial consequences of it were realized, (as it is conceded by Mr Adams, was the case) these same 'leaders,' whoever they might be, would still cherish the embryo project, and wait for other contingencies, to enable them to effect it? On what authority can Mr Adams assume that the project merely '*slumbered*' for years, if his private evidence applies only to the time of its origin.

The opposition to the measures of government in 1808 arose from causes, which were common to the people, not only of New-England, but of all the commercial states, as was manifested in New-York, Philadelphia, and elsewhere. By what process of fair reasoning then can that opposition be referred to, or connected with a plan, which is said to have originated in 1804, and to have been intended to embrace merely a *northern* confederacy? The objection to the Louisiana treaty was founded on the just construction of the compact between sovereign states. It was believed in New-England, that new members could not be added to the confederacy beyond the territorial limits of the contracting parties without the consent of those parties. This was considered as a fair subject of remonstrance, and as justifying proposals for an amendment of the constitution. But so far were the Federal party from attempting to use this as an additional incentive to the passions of the day, that in a report made to the Legislature of 1813 by a committee of which Mr Adams's 'excellent friend' *Josiah Quincy* was chairman, (Louisiana having at this time been admitted into the Union) it is expressly stated, that '*they have not been disposed to connect this great constitutional question with the transient calamities of the day, from which it is in their opinion very apparently distinguished both in its cause and consequences.*' That in their view of this great constitutional question, they have confined themselves to topics and arguments drawn from the constitution, 'with the hope



‘of limiting the further progress of the evil, rather than with the expectation of immediate relief during the continuance of existing influences in the national administration.’ This report was accepted ; and thus the ‘project’ instead of being used as fuel to the flame, is deliberately taken out of it, and presented to the people by ‘the leaders’ as resting on distinct considerations from the ‘transient calamities,’ and for which present redress ought neither to be sought, or expected.

To the embargo imposed in December, 1807, nearly all the delegation of Massachusetts was opposed. The pretexts for imposing it were deemed by her citizens a mockery of her sufferings. Owning nearly one third of the tonnage in the United States, she felt that her voice ought to be heard in what related to its security. Depending principally on her foreign trade and fisheries for support, her situation appeared desperate under the operation of this law in its terms perpetual. It was a bitter aggravation of her sufferings to be told, that its object was to preserve these interests. No people, at peace, in an equal space of time, ever endured severer privations. She could not consider the annihilation of her trade as included in the power to regulate it. To her lawyers, statesmen, and citizens in general, it appeared a direct violation of the constitution. It was universally odious. The disaffection was not confined to the federal party. Mr Adams, it is said, and not contradicted, announced in his letters to the members of Congress, that government must not rely upon its own friends. The interval from 1807 to 1812 was filled up by a series of restrictive measures which kept alive the discontent and irritation of the popular mind. Then followed the war, under circumstances which aggravated the public distresses. In its progress, Massachusetts was deprived of garrisons for her ports—with a line of sea-coast equal in extent to one third of that of all the other maritime States, she was left during the whole war nearly defenceless. Her citizens subject to incessant alarm ;—a portion of the country invaded, and taken possession of as a conquered territory. Her own militia arrayed, and encamped at an enormous expense ; pay and subsistence supplied from her nearly exhausted treasury, and reimbursement refused, even to this day. Now, what, under the pressure and excitement of these measures, was the conduct of the federal party, the ‘devoted majority,’ with the military force of the State in their hands ;—with the encouragement to be derived from a conviction that the Northern States were in sympathy with their feelings, and that government could not rely on its own friends ? Did they resist the laws ? Not in a solitary instance.

Did they threaten a separation of the States? Did they array their forces with a show of such disposition? Did the government or people of Massachusetts in any one instance swerve from their allegiance to the Union? The reverse of all this is the truth. Abandoned by the national government, because she declined, for reasons which her highest tribunal adjudged to be constitutional, to surrender her militia into the hands of a military prefect, although they were always equipped, and ready and faithful under their own officers, she nevertheless clung to the Union as to the ark of her safety, she ordered her well trained militia into the field, stationed them at the points of danger, defrayed their expenses from her own treasury, and garrisoned with them the national forts. All her taxes and excises were paid with punctuality and promptness, an example by no means followed by some of the States, in which the cry for war had been loudest. These facts are recited for no other purpose but that of preparing for the inquiry, what becomes of Mr Adams' 'key,' his 'project,' and his 'postulates?' The latter were to all intents and purposes, to use his language, 'consummated.'

Laws unconstitutional in the public opinion had been enacted. A great majority of an exasperated people were in a state of the highest excitement. The legislature (if his word be taken) was under 'the management of the leaders.' The judicial courts were on their side, and the juries were, as he pretends, contaminated. A golden opportunity had arrived. 'Now was the winter of their discontent made glorious summer.' All the combustibles for revolution were ready. When, behold! instead of a dismembered Union, military movements, a northern confederacy, and British alliance, accomplished at the favorable moment of almost total prostration of the credit and power of the national rulers, a small and peaceful deputation of grave citizens, selected from the ranks of civil life, and legislative councils, assembled at Hartford. There, calm and collected, like the Pilgrims, from whom they descended, and not unmindful of those who had achieved the independence of their country, they deliberated on the most effectual means of preserving for their fellow-citizens and their descendants the civil and political liberty which had been won, and bequeathed to them.

The character of this much injured assembly has been subjected to heavier imputations, under an entire deficiency not only of proof, but of probability, than ever befel any other set of men, discharging merely the duties of a committee of a legislative body, and making a public report of their doings to their constituents. These imputations have never assumed a precise



form but vague opinions have prevailed of a combination to separate the Union. As Mr Adams has condescended, by the manner in which he speaks of that convention, to adopt or countenance those imputations on its proceedings, we may be excused for making a few more remarks on the subject, although this is not a suitable occasion to go into a full explanation and vindication of that measure.

The subject naturally resolves itself into four points, or questions:

First, the constitutional right of a State to appoint delegates to such a convention :

Secondly, the propriety and expediency of exercising that right at that time :

Thirdly, the objects intended to be attained by it, and the powers given for that purpose by the State to the delegates ; and

Fourthly, the manner in which the delegates exercised their power.

As to the first point, it will not be doubted that the people have a right ‘ in an orderly and peaceable manner to assemble to consult upon the common good ;’ and to request of their rulers ‘ by the way of addresses, petitions, or remonstrances, redress of the wrongs done them, and of the grievances they suffer.’ This is enumerated in the constitution of Massachusetts among our natural, essential, and unalienable rights ; and it is recognized in the constitution of the United States ; and who then shall dare to set limits to its exercise, or to prescribe to us the manner in which it shall be exerted ? We have already spoken of the state of public affairs and the measures of the general government, in the year 1814, and of the degree of excitement, amounting nearly to desperation, to which they had brought the minds of the people in this and the adjoining States. Their sufferings and apprehensions could no longer be silently endured, and numerous meetings of the citizens had been held on the occasion in various parts of the country. It was then thought that the measures called for in such an emergency would be more prudently and safely matured and promoted by the government of the State, than by unorganized bodies of individuals, strongly excited by what they considered to be the unjust and oppressive measures of the general government. If all the citizens had the right, jointly and severally, to consult for the common good, and to seek for a redress of their grievances, no reason can be given why their legislative assembly, which represents them all, may not exercise the same right in their behalf. We nowhere find any constitutional prohibition or restraint of the exercise of this power by the State ; and if not prohibited it is reserved to the State. We maintain then that the people had an unquestionable right, in this as well as in other modes, to express their opinions of the measures of the general government, and to seek, ‘ by addresses, petitions or remonstrances,’ to obtain a redress of their grievances and relief from their sufferings.



If there was no constitutional objection to this mode of proceeding, it will be readily admitted that it was in all respects the most eligible. In the state of distress and danger which then oppressed all hearts, it was to be apprehended, as before suggested, that large and frequent assemblies of the people might lead to measures inconsistent with the peace and order of the community. If an appeal was to be made to the government of the United States, it was likely to be more effectual, if proceeding from the whole State collectively, than from insulated assemblies of citizens; and the application in that form would tend also to repress the public excitement, and prevent any sudden and unadvised proceedings of the people, by holding out to them the prospect of relief through the influence of their State government. This latter consideration had great weight with the legislature; and it is believed to have been the only motive that could have induced some of the delegates to that convention to quit the seclusion to which they had voluntarily retired, to expose themselves anew to all the fatigue and anxiety, the odium, the misrepresentations, calumnies, and unjust reproaches, which so frequently accompany and follow the best exertions for the public good.

If each one of the States had the right thus to seek a redress of grievances, it is clear that two or more States might consult together for the same purpose; and the only mode in which they could consult each other was by a mutual appointment of delegates for that purpose.

But this is not the only ground, nor is it the strongest, on which to rest the justification of the proceedings in question. If the government of the United States in a time of such distress and danger should be unable, or should neglect, to afford protection and relief to the people, the legislature of the State would not only have a right, but it would be their duty, to consult together, and, if practicable, to furnish these from their own resources. This would be in aid of the general government. How severely the people of Massachusetts experienced at that time the want of this ability or disposition, in the general government, we need not repeat. If the legislature of a single State might under such circumstances endeavour to provide for its defence, without infringing the national compact, no reason is perceived, why they might not appoint a committee or delegates, to confer with delegates of neighbouring States who were exposed to like dangers and sufferings, to devise and suggest to their respective legislatures measures by which their own resources might be employed 'in a manner not repugnant to their obligations as members of the Union.' A part of New-England had been invaded, and was then held by the enemy, without an effort by the general government to regain it; and if another invasion, which was then threatened and generally expected, had taken place, and the New-England States had been still deserted by the government, and left to rely on their own resources, it is obvious that the best mode of providing for their com-



mon defence would have been by a simultaneous and combined operation of all their forces. The States originally possessed this right, and we hold that it has never been surrendered, nor taken from them by the people.

The argument on this point might be easily extended ; but we may confidently rely on the two grounds above mentioned, to wit, the right of the people, through their State legislatures or otherwise, to petition and remonstrate for a redress of their grievances ; and the right of the States in a time of war and of threatened invasion to make the necessary provisions for their own defence. To these objects was confined the whole authority conferred by our legislature on the delegates whom they appointed. They were directed to meet and confer with other delegates, and to devise and suggest measures of relief for the adoption of the respective States ; but not to represent or act for their constituents by agreeing to, or adopting any such measures themselves, or in behalf of the States.

But whilst we strenuously maintain this right of the people, to complain, to petition, and to remonstrate in the strongest terms against measures which they think to be unconstitutional, unjust, or oppressive, and to do this in the manner which they shall deem most convenient or effectual, provided it be in an 'orderly and peaceable manner ;' we readily admit that a wise people would not hastily resort to it, especially in this imposing form, on every occasion of partial and temporary discontent or suffering. We therefore proceed to consider,

Secondly, the propriety and expediency of adopting that measure in the autumn of 1814. On this point it is enough to say, that the grievances that were suffered and the dangers that were apprehended at that time, and the strong excitement which they produced among all the people, which is stated more particularly elsewhere in this address, rendered some measures for their relief indispensably necessary. If the legislature had not undertaken their cause, it appeared to be certain, as we have already suggested, that the people would take it into their own hands ; and there was reason to fear that the proceedings in that case might be less orderly and peaceful, and at the same time, less efficacious.

Thirdly. We have already stated the objects which our State government had in view, in proposing the convention at Hartford, and the powers conferred on their delegates. If, instead of these avowed objects, there had been any secret plot for a dismemberment of the Union, in which it had been desired to engage the neighboring States, the measures for that purpose we may suppose would have been conducted in the most private manner possible. On the contrary, the resolution of our legislature for appointing their delegates, and prescribing their powers and duties, was openly discussed and passed in the usual manner ; and a copy



of it was immediately sent, by direction of the legislature, to the governor of every State in the Union.

Fourthly. The only remaining question is, whether the delegates exceeded or abused their powers. As to this, we have only to refer to the report of their proceedings, and to their journal, which is deposited in the archives of this State.

That report, which was published immediately after the adjournment of the convention, and was soon after accepted by the legislature, holds forth the importance of the Union as paramount to all other considerations; enforces it by elaborate reasoning, and refers in express terms to *Washington's farewell address*, as its text book. If, then, no power to do wrong *was given* by the legislature to the convention, and if nothing unconstitutional, disloyal, or tending to disunion, was in fact *done* (all which is manifest of record), there remains no pretext for impeaching the members of the convention by imputing to them covert and nefarious designs; except the uncharitable one, that the characters of the men justify the belief, that they cherished in their hearts wishes, and intentions, to do, what they had no authority to execute, and what in fact they did not attempt. On this head, to the people of New England who were acquainted with these characters, no explanation is necessary. For the information of others, it behoves those of us who were members to speak without reference to ourselves. With this reserve we may all be permitted to say, without fear of contradiction, that they fairly represented whatever of moral, intellectual, or patriotic worth, is to be found in the character of the New England community; that they retained all the personal consideration and confidence, which are enjoyed by the best citizens, those who have deceased, to the hour of their death, and those who survive, to the present time. For the satisfaction of those who look to self-love, and to private interest, as springs of human action, it may be added, that among the mass of citizens, friends, and connexions, whom they represented, were many, whose fortunes were principally vested in the public funds, to whom the disunion of the States would have been ruin. That convention may be said to have originated with the people. Measures for relief had been demanded from immense numbers, in counties and towns, in all parts of the State, long before it was organized. Its main and avowed object was *the defence of this part of the country against the common enemy*. The war then wore its most threatening aspect. New England was destitute of national troops; her treasuries exhausted; her taxes drawn into the national coffers.

The proceedings, and report of the convention, were in conformity with this object. The *burden* of that report consisted in recommending an application to Congress to permit the States to provide for their own defence, and to be indemnified for the expense, by reimbursement, in some shape, from the National Government, of, at least, a portion of *their own money*. This conven-



tion adjourned early in January. On the 27th of the same month, an act of Congress was passed, which gave to the State Governments, the very power which was sought by Massachusetts; viz—that of ‘raising, organizing and officering’ state troops, ‘to be employed in the State raising the same, or in an adjoining State’ and providing for their pay and subsistence. This we repeat was the most important object aimed at by the institution of the convention, and by the report of that body. Had this act of Congress passed, before the act of Massachusetts, for organizing the convention, *that convention never would have existed*. Had such an act been anticipated by the convention, or passed before its adjournment, that assembly would have considered its commission as in a great measure, superseded. For although it prepared and reported sundry amendments to the constitution of the United States, to be submitted to *all* the States, and might even, if knowing of this act of Congress, have persisted in doing the same thing; yet, as this proposal for amendments could have been accomplished in other modes, they could have had no special motive for so doing, but what arose from their being together; and from the consideration which might be hoped for, as to their propositions, from that circumstance. It is thus matter of absolute demonstration, to all who do not usurp the privilege of the *SEARCHER of hearts* that the design of the Hartford convention and its doings were not only constitutional and laudable, but sanctioned by an act of Congress, passed after the report was published, not indeed with express reference to it, but with its principal features, and thus admitting the reasonableness of its general tenor, and principal object. It is indeed grievous to perceive Mr Adams condescending to intimate that the Convention was adjourned to Boston; and in a strain of rhetorical pathos connecting his imaginary plot, then at least in the thirteenth year of its age, with the ‘catastrophe’ which awaited the ultimate proceedings of the convention. That assembly *adjourned without day, after making its report*. It was ipso facto dissolved, like other Committees. One of its resolutions did indeed purport that ‘if the application of these States to the government of the United States, (*recommended in a foregoing resolution*) *should be unsuccessful, and peace should not be concluded, and the defence of these States should be neglected as it has been*, since the commencement of the war, it will be, in the opinion of this Convention, expedient for the Legislature of the several States, to appoint delegates *to another Convention* to meet at Boston on the third Tuesday of June next, with such powers and instructions as the exigency of a crisis, so momentous may require.’ On this it is to be observed,

First, That the Convention contemplated in the foregoing resolution never was appointed, and never could have been, according to the terms of that resolution; because, as is shown above, the object of the intended application to Congress had been attained. And, Secondly, if the contingencies mentioned in that resolution



had occurred, the question of forming such a new Convention, and the appointment of the delegates, must have gone into the hands of new assemblies ; because all the Legislatures of the New England states would have been dissolved, and there would have been new elections, before the time proposed for the second convention. And, lastly, it is matter of public notoriety that the report of this convention produced the effect of assuaging the public sensibility, and operated to repress the vague and ardent expectations entertained by many of our citizens, of immediate and effectual relief, from the evils of their condition.

We pass over the elaborate exposition of constitutional law in the President's letter having no call, nor any inclination at this time to controvert its leading principles. Neither do we comment upon, though we perceive and feel, the unjust, and we must be excused for saying, insidious mode in which he has grouped together distant and disconnected occurrences, which happened in his absence from the country, for the purpose of producing, by their collocation, a glaring and sinister effect upon the federal party. They were all of a public nature. The arguments concerning their merit or demerit have been exhausted ; and time, and the good sense of an intelligent people, will place them ultimately in their true light, even though Mr Adams should continue to throw obstacles in the way to this harmonious reaction of public opinion.

It has been a source of wonder and perplexity to many in our community, to observe the immense difference in the standards by which public opinion has been led to measure the same kind of proceedings, when adopted in different States. No pretence is urged that any actual resistance to the laws, or forcible violation of the constitutional compact, has ever happened in Massachusetts. Constitutional questions have arisen here as well as in other States. It is surprising and consolatory that the number has not been greater, and that the termination of them has not been less amicable. To the discussion of some of them great excitement was unavoidably incident ; but in comparing cases with causes and effects, the impartial observer will perceive nothing to authorize any disparagement of *this State*, to the advantage of the pretensions of other members of the confederacy.

On this subject we disclaim the purpose of instituting invidious comparisons ; but every one knows that Massachusetts has not been alone in complaints and remonstrances against the acts of the national government. Nothing can be found on the records of her legislative proceedings, surpassing the tone of resolutions adopted in other States in reprobation of the alien and sedition laws. In one State opposition to the execution of a treaty, in others to the laws instituting the bank, has sounded the note of preparation for resistance in more impassioned strains than were ever adopted here. And at this moment, claims of State rights, and protests against the measures of the national government, in



terms, for which no parallel can be found in Massachusetts, are ushered into the halls of Congress, under the most solemn and imposing forms of State authority. It is not our part to censure or to approve these proceedings. Massachusetts has *done* nothing at any time, in opposition to the national government, and she has said nothing in derogation of its powers, that is not fully justified by the constitution; and not so much as other States have said, with more decided emphasis; and, as it is believed, without the stimulus of the same actual grievances. We are no longer at a loss to account for the prevalence of these prejudices against this part of the Union, since they can now be traced, not only to calumnies openly propagated in the season of bitter contention by irritated opponents, but to the secret and hitherto unknown aspersions of Mr Adams.

Mr Jefferson, then at the head of government, declares that the effect of Mr Adams' communication to him at their interview in March, 1808, was such on his mind, as to induce a change in the system of his administration. Like impressions were doubtless made on Mr Giles and others, who then gave direction to the public sentiment. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, if Mr Adams had not seen fit to proclaim to the world his former secret denunciation, there had still been room to hope that those impressions would be speedily obliterated; that odious distinctions between the people of different States would be abolished; and that all would come to feel a common interest in referring symptoms of excitement against the procedure of the national government, which have been manifested successively on so many occasions, and in so many States, to the feelings, which, in free governments, are always roused by like causes, and are characteristic, not of a factious but a generous sensibility to real or supposed usurpation. But Mr Adams returns to the charge with new animation; and by his political legacy to the people of Massachusetts, undertakes to entail upon them lasting dishonor. He reaffirms his convictions of the reality of the old project, persists in connecting it with later events, and dooms himself to the vocation of proving that the federal party were either traitors or dupes. Thus he has again (but not like a healing angel) troubled the pool, and we know not when the turbid waters will subside.

It must be apparent, that we have not sought, but have been driven into this unexpected and unwelcome controversy. On the restoration of peace in 1815, the federal party felt like men, who, as by a miracle, find themselves *safe* from the most appalling *peril*. Their joy was too engrossing to permit a vindictive recurrence to the causes of that peril. Every emotion of animosity was permitted to subside. From that time until the appearance of Mr Adams' publication, they had cordially joined in the general gratulation on the prosperity of their country, and the security of its institutions. They were conscious of no deviation



from patriotic duty, *in any measure* wherein they had acted, or which had passed with their approbation. They were not only contented, but grateful, in the prospect of the duration of civil liberty, according to the forms which the people had deliberately sanctioned. These objects being secured, they cheerfully acquiesced in the administration of government, by whomsoever the people might call to places of trust, and of honor.

With such sentiments and feelings, the public cannot but participate in the astonishment of the undersigned, at the time, the manner, and the nature, of Mr Adams' publication. We make no attempt to assign motives to him, nor to comment on such as may be imagined.

The causes of past controversies, passing, as they were, to oblivion among existing generations, and arranging themselves, as they must do, for the impartial scrutiny of future historians, the revival of them can be no less distasteful to the public, than painful to us. Yet, it could not be expected, that while Mr Adams, from his high station, sends forth the unfounded suggestions of his imagination, or his jealousy, as materials for present opinion, and future history, we should, *by silence*, give countenance to his charges; nor that we should neglect to vindicate the reputation of ourselves, our associates, and our Fathers.

H. G. OTIS,

ISRAEL THORNDIKE,

T. H. PERKINS,

WM. PRESCOTT,

DANIEL SARGENT,

JOHN LOWELL,

WM. SULLIVAN,

CHARLES JACKSON,

WARREN DUTTON,

BENJ. PICKMAN,

HENRY CABOT,

*Son of the late George Cabot.*

C. C. PARSONS,

*Son of Theophilus Parsons, Esq. deceased.*

*Boston, January 28, 1829.*

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I subscribed the foregoing letter, and not the Reply, for the following reasons: Mr Adams in his statement published in the National Intelligencer, spoke of the leaders of the Federal party, *in the year 1808 and for several years previous*, as engaged in a systematic opposition to the general government, having for its object the dissolution of the Union, and the establishment of a separate confederacy by the aid of a foreign power. As a proof of that disposition, particular allusion is made to the opposition to the embargo in the Courts of Justice in Massachusetts. This pointed the charge directly at my late father, whose efforts in that cause are probably remembered; and was the reason of my joining in the application to Mr Adams to know on what such a charge was founded. If this construction of the statement needs confirmation, it is to be found in one of the letters lately published in Salem as Mr Adams's.

Mr Adams in his answer has extended his accusation to a subsequent period. In the events of that time I have not the same interest as in those preceding it; and as the Reply was necessarily co-extensive with the answer, that reason prevented me from joining in it. I take this opportunity, however, to say for myself, that I find in Mr Adams's answer no justification of his charges; and, in reply to that portion of his letter particularly addressed to me, that I have seen no proof, and shall not readily believe, that any portion of my father's political course is to be attributed to the influence there suggested.

FRANKLIN DEXTER.

*Boston, January 28, 1829.*





